

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the nature of Christ's exaltation in His resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Wherein consists Christ's exaltation?
- A. Christ's exaltation consists in His rising again from the dead on the third day, in ascending into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day.

S.C. 28; L.C. 51-53; W.C. of F. VIII, XXXII; Savoy 8, 32; Young 68

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Acts 1:1-11

**Support Passages:** Matthew 27:62-28:20; Mark 15:42-16:20; Luke 23:50-24:53; John 19:38-21:25; I Corinthians 15:1-11; I Timothy 3:16

**BIBLE STORY**

The resurrection of Christ from one of the gospels.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

Acts 1:8

8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

**APPLICATION**

We are to be witnesses to the world of the risen, glorified Christ.

## SUMMARY

"There is abundant Scriptural proof for the exaltation of Christ. The gospel story clearly shows us that the humiliation of Christ was followed by His exaltation. The classical passage to prove the latter is found in Philippians 2:9-11: 'Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave Him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' But in addition to this there are several others, such as Mark 16:19; Luke 24:26; John 7:39; Acts 2:33, 5:31; Romans 8:17, 34; Ephesians 1:20, 4:10; I Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:3, 2:9, 10:12. There is a close connection between the two states. The state of exaltation must be regarded as the judicial result of the state of humiliation. In His capacity as Mediator Christ met the demands of the law in its federal and penal aspects, paying the penalty of sin and meriting everlasting life. Therefore His justification had to follow and He had to be put in possession of the reward. Since He was a public person and accomplished His work publicly, justice required that the exaltation should also be a public matter. The exaltation of Christ has a threefold significance. Each one of the stages was a virtual declaration of God that Christ had met the demands of the law, and was therefore entitled to His reward. The first two stages also had exemplary significance, since they symbolized what will take place in the life of believers. And, finally, all four stages were destined to be instrumental in the perfect glorification of believers."<sup>1</sup>

Thus begins Dr. Berkhof in his excellent treatment of this subject. Many of the Scriptures that he adduces, we have already been acquainted with but it will be helpful to review the Philippians passage in particular. The four stages of Jesus exaltation are given in the Larger Catechism in the answer to question 50 but we see them also in the Shorter Catechism question for this lesson. We shall consider the first two in this lesson and study the third and fourth separately in the next lessons.

There have been many attempts to do away with the resurrection of Christ and for many different reasons. In the main it is due to the supernatural or miraculous nature of the resurrection that modernists reject it as they do all the miracles of the Bible. But at the outset it is obvious that any attempt to deny the resurrection of Christ must also deny the blessed hope of the Christian which is the second coming of Christ. It is also to deny the possibility of ones own resurrection for if Christ is not raised from the dead neither shall we. For this reason Paul writes, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless" (I Corinthians 15:17).

Some of the theories that attempt to do away with the resurrection are (1), that Christ swooned on the cross as the result of ingesting the vinegar and gall and did not really die, (2) that the whole thing was a lie, trumped up by the

disciples who took His body from the cross, (3) that Christ's appearances after his death were really visions and not flesh appearances, and (4) that the stories arise from mythology to which the Greeks were so addicted. With a knowledge of the biblical accounts in the gospels of the resurrection we may reject these theories quite easily. A belief in the literal interpretation of scripture is what is required. The lie according to Scripture was not the fact of the resurrection but that His disciples "came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep" (Matthew 28:11ff).

Luke (who wrote the Acts) claims that Christ presented Himself alive by many convincing proofs to hundreds of His disciples over a period of forty days. These proofs are set out for us in the gospel accounts of the resurrection and also by Paul in the support passages for this lesson. Luke writes that after these forty days of appearances, Jesus gathered His disciples together and while they were looking on He was lifted up and a cloud received Him (Acts 1). He was taken up in the flesh, that is, with His resurrected body, which was the same one that suffered and died on the cross (Luke 24:39ff, John 20:26ff), in which body Jesus is at the right hand of Majesty, and in which He will return at the last day.

This body had flesh and bones and yet it was no longer subject to death nor to any of the miseries of this life. In bodies like His glorious body, we shall be raised when He returns. He will come back in just the same way as He was seen to go into heaven, in the clouds and glorious (I Thessalonians 4:17). Statements to this effect in places such as Matthew 24:30 do not apply to His second coming but to His Messianic appearance for they are really quotes of the Old Testament (e.g. Daniel 7:13-14). His Messianic kingdom continues to be so. After all, this is the meaning of the exaltation of Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962, p. 344ff.